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A GREAT CATASTROPHE.

FOUR VILLAGES DESTROYED.

BURSTING OF A STORAGE RESERVOIR IN MASSACHUSETTS.

MANUFACTURING TOWNS SWEEP AWAY—TERRIBLE LOSS OF LIFE—DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY.

A frightful accident occurred on Saturday morning near Northampton, Mass., by which a great number of lives were lost and an immense amount of property was swept out of existence. On the upper part of Mill River, a small tributary of the Connecticut, in Hampshire County, there are three large reservoirs for the use of the numerous factories which line the banks of the stream along its whole course. One of these burst suddenly between 7 and 8 a. m., and the imprisoned waters were hurled with tremendous violence upon the villages below, while some of the inhabitants were not yet afloat, and others were just going to their work. The southern half of the village of Williamsburg was almost obliterated. Thence the torrent swept over Skinnerville, Haydensville, and Leeds, destroying all the principal factories, and a great number of dwelling-houses. The disaster was so sudden that hardly anybody had time to get out of its path. The flood poured through the narrow gorge formed by the hills on each side of Mill River, demolishing everything before it, and carrying down an awful debris of shattered timbers, broken machinery, uprooted trees, and mangled corpses. At Florence, five miles below Williamsburg, the country becomes more open, and there the torrent spread itself over the meadows, and so spent its force. At Northampton, however, three miles further on, the swollen current of the river demolished several bridges and interrupted railway travel.

In the midst of the confusion which reigns, no accurate estimate of the loss of life and property has been possible. The latest reports from the scene of the disaster will be found below; and on the second page of THE TRIBUNE is printed the detailed story of the whole of this appalling catastrophe.

LATEST DETAILS OF THE DISASTER.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCALITY—THE RESERVOIR ALWAYS THOUGHT TO BE UNSAFE—THE FIRST WARNING OF THE DANGER—ONLY THREE HOUSES LEFT STANDING IN LEEDS—THE DAMAGE AND LOSS OF LIFE IN WILLIAMSBURG, HAYDENSVILLE AND SKINNERSVILLE.

(BY TELEGRAPH TO THE TRIBUNE.)

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—The terrible catastrophe which has swept away three whole villages in the Connecticut Valley, carrying with them 150 lives and a million of property, stands with a single parallel in the world—the bursting of the Breadfield reservoir in Sheffield, England, ten years ago. The flood of Saturday, though less disastrous to life and property than that, was as unexpected and as awful in its consequences. The bursting of the undermined wall was unanticipated, and the first warning that the people had on rising from their breakfast-tables was the sight of a mass of drift-wood, as high as the eaves of a two-story house, roaring down the road and sweeping everything before it. The whole country about is like a gutter from which the mighty stream could find no lateral outlet, and it had only to rush on to the end of the valley, carrying houses, trees, and human beings like chips upon its breast. Its force was soon spent, but its track was marked by desolation. There was hardly a living thing left, but on all sides could be seen dead cattle, horses, and even dogs, with here and there a corpse, perhaps, battered and disfigured beyond recognition.

THE LOCALITY.

Mill River, the scene of the disaster, is a stream of about the width of the Neponset. It rises in the town of Williamsburg and runs south-easterly until it empties into the Connecticut just below Northampton. On its banks are situated the manufacturing villages of Williamsburg, Skinnerville, Haydensville, Leeds, Florence, and Bay State Mills. The first three are in the town of Williamsburg, and the last three in Northampton. The river, in the Summer, being subject to severe droughts, the volume of water is kept uniform by two great reservoirs, one at Goshen and the other at Williamsburg. The valley of the river is peculiar in its formation, being very narrow, and not over 600 feet wide at any place. At Skinnerville and Leeds it is extremely narrow. The river is liable to sudden freshets, and, owing to its narrow valley, rises to a great height.

The Williamsburg reservoir has always been considered unsafe, and in times of flood sections apprehensions have been felt by the dwellers in the valley. A young gentleman in Haydensville told the writer that two years ago, at the time of a heavy rain, his father would permit none of the family to go to bed, but kept them up with lights burning all night, so great was his apprehension concerning the reservoir. The reservoir is in the village of Williamsburg. The two branches of the river meet, the west branch coming from the Goshen and the east branch from the Williamsburg reservoir. It had an area of 164 acres, and it was made by damming up a valley between two mountains. The dam was about 400 feet long on top, and was 65 feet wide at the bottom, sloping gradually to the top. It consisted of an embankment of ordinary gravel, in the center of which rose a wall of masonry of ordinary rubble-stone laid in water-proof cement. This wall was four feet wide at the base, and tapered wedge-like almost to a point at the top. At the bottom and through the center of the dam extended a 15-inch iron pipe, about 50 feet long. The waste water ran out of the reservoir at the top through a sluice-way on the right, close to which was the gate-keeper's house.

The great defect seems to have been in the wall of masonry at the dam; also in its width and material. This wall, it now appears, was laid on the solid rock bed on the west side, but on the east foundation was several feet higher, and appeared to be laid on nothing but the natural gravel. It was here that the water was first seen leaking through the bottom. This was the fatal error of the constructors. Though the dam has generally been considered unsafe, the County Commissioners viewed the work when completed, six or seven years ago, and pronounced it safe. The wall was then, however, concealed from view, so that its faults of construction could not have been noticed.

THE VILLAGE OF LEEDS.

Of the village of Leeds but very little remains. There are but three houses standing on the east side of the river, where formerly was situated the main street and the village green. Shortly after 7, says a resident of the place, I heard an unusual noise, but supposed it was water rolling over the dam, and paid no particular attention to it. Before 8 o'clock a sudden alarm was given, and within a few seconds a wall of drift-wood as high as the eaves of a two-story house was seen rolling along, carrying everything before it. The dam supplying the motive power of the Nonotuck Silk Company's factory was first attacked, and though this was a solid structure, it bent before it and then gave way. The dam was built about 25 years ago at a cost of \$5,000, and had a fall of 26 feet in the center. The mill was only damaged slightly. The boarding-house opposite the waterfall, owned by the corporation, was swept from its foundations and down Mill-street, over the little plot of

ground that was always so well cared for, and thrown against two or three other boarding-houses, which only escaped utter destruction by the jam made, with the assistance of two or three drifting trees. Then followed the destruction of the grist-mill. The office of the Northampton Emery Wheel Company and the hand-engine house, with contents, were next in the order of destruction, and these were followed by the other buildings on the brink of the river and on the main street. House after house fell, one of the oldest places in the vicinity was thrown with violence against a large elm tree and uprooted it, and was only saved from utter ruin by a fortunate collision with a brace of stromer trees. The village chapel, followed, and two or three double houses. Then, with a crash, fell Warner's button factory, and the ruin of Leeds village was complete.

INCIDENTS.

There are many incidents related of the flood and the hairbreadth escapes thereof. The alarm seems to have been heard by the residents, such as is alleged to have been given by a fleet horseman, and the only intimation the people had of the impending danger was when they first saw the wall of debris approaching and heard its roar. In Mr. Quigley's house sat Mrs. Quigley, two daughters, and a school-teacher, named Miss Marble, and, having just finished breakfast, they were sitting talking when they heard the noise, and retreated to the upper story. While standing there the main part of the house was wrenched away, leaving them with but a thin partition against the swelling tide. Their courage did not fail them, however, and as they saw a neighbor named Humphreys floating by on a portion of the roof of his house, they raised the window and pulled him in. They were all saved, as were, also, Humphreys's wife and mother, who each grasped a child and stood on beds to keep them above the water.

Frederick Clough, a foreman at the button factory, heard the roar of the coming flood and hastened to Mrs. Bonney's house, and told them to flee. Mrs. Bonney obeyed, running to the hill. Clough seizing one of Mr. Ryan's children, a granddaughter of Mrs. Bonney, and begged Mrs. Ryan and Carrie Bonney to follow him, but they stood fixed to the spot in terror and fright. He fled with the child. They remained with another child and so were swept away. Mr. Bonney's other daughter, Annie, fled from the mill and was saved. Ryan Moran's tenement, on Main-st., was one of the few that did not go off, being saved by the jam above mentioned. The second story was, however, flooded, and six children were found huddled behind a bed in the chamber, up to their necks in water and numb and half dead with cold. One little boy came floating down to Leeds on a board, from somewhere above. Luckily, he steered for a little knoll, not yet covered, and throwing away his board, he climbed to the highest point of the knoll. Still the water rose and only a spot as large as a table remained, when the water reached its greatest height and the plucky fellow was saved.

PECUNIARY LOSSES.

It is exceedingly difficult to estimate the pecuniary loss. Both mills of the Critehall Ivory Button Company were swept away, and the loss will probably be \$100,000. The Emery Wheel Company loses about \$1,000; the Nonotuck Silk Company loses its dam, which will make necessary a suspension of operations for some time. A. Hennessy, grocer, loses store-house and horse, probably worth \$5,000, and in addition to this there are several tenement houses owned by the several corporations and private persons, all of which are now a complete wreck.

THE ALARM AT SKINNERSVILLE.

Mr. Jerome Hillman heard the Williamsburg bells ringing, and then the fearful rush of waters sounded in his ears. He jumped on horseback and ran at full speed toward Haydensville. Once he looked behind, and the air seemed to be full of flying timber. Great trees were turning end for end; now their enormous roots were in the air, and then he would see their trunks and branches whirling round. At the top of a perpendicular wall of water, advancing down the valley, 50 feet high, were seen houses and barns turning over. He reached Haydensville and warned the hands in the Brass shops, who all escaped in safety. The alarm was caught up by others, and by such means many of the operatives down stream saved their lives. One person, it appears, had the temerity to rush to the Congregational Church and pull the bell rope; but it would appear that he, too, got frightened, for but one or two peals were heard before the awful rush was both seen and heard. Men and women had to run to the nearest high ground for safety.

IN WILLIAMSBURG.

It was in Williamsburg that the flood began and where its effects were most disastrous to human life. Fifty-six lives were lost in this single village. The signs of ruin are most horrible. At the empty reservoir is seen the jagged walls of the dam. Below, for a thousand feet and more, the bed of stream is gouged out in chasms to a depth of 50 feet. Beyond, acres of woodland have been entirely despoiled, leaving not a trace behind. For miles the fertile meadows have been destroyed and can never be regained. They are gullied and completely covered with sand and gravel, and imbedded with great boulders, many of them weighing over a ton apiece. About one-third of the village has been destroyed, the flood having cut a broad swath through the place, carrying houses down the stream. The River, just below the meeting of the two branches, changed its course, and leaving its old bed, has spread out over the entire meadows, where it is now running. In this typical New-England village the contrasts between prosperity and misery, beauty and desolation, are sharp and sudden. From tasteful cottages, smooth lawns and blooming flowers, one steps at once into scenes of deepest woe, where the squalor and seamed ground, great shapeless masses of splinters which were once houses, or houses half destroyed with their sides torn out, or upside down, are in place of the prosperity of yesterday morning.

In the little Town Hall are laid the recovered bodies, ghastly and some mutilated and gashed by the floating timbers, wrapped in sheets, waiting for friends to identify them. Long strings of teams, filled with curious strangers, are crowding and recrossing the river, where it flows over the new bed it has made for itself. Now and then a wagon comes in loaded with dead bodies just recovered. Great loads of coffins are continually arriving, and the hearse goes briskly back and forth, followed by a few mourners on foot. The people have too much to do to mourn long, and the funerals, though many, are brief. Under the benches, in the great cemetery on the hill-top, they are digging thirty new graves. The clothes are all wanted for the living, and the dead are buried in nothing but winding sheets as of old.

The principal manufacturing establishments destroyed in Williamsburg are the button-factory of Wm. Spellman and the saw and grist-mill of Adams & Hitchcock. It is impossible as yet to estimate the damage done in this village. The mill of Adams & Hitchcock was valued at \$30,000 and there was a valuable stock of grain and logs on hand. The woolen mill of Henry James was not destroyed, but a large part of the stock was lost. Henry Birmingham lost his life while trying to escape from the mill. His whole family was also lost, as was that of Dr. Johnson.

Among the sad incidents is that of seven young girls, who climbed into an apple tree, thinking it would stand, but they were all swept away. The body of a little child, 4 years old, was found with a pair of new shoes in her hand. In the toes of

the shoes were found four \$20 bills, which the mother had probably tried to save.

In an eddy, between Skinnerville and Williamsburg, were found the bodies of seven persons, including those of Dr. Johnson and some of his family.

HAYDENSVILLE.

The disaster overtook Haydensville at an inopportune moment. It was intended to have to-day devoted to services in the church in memory of ex-Lieut.-Gov. Joel Hayden, who died in November, and in whose honor the place was named. He was to have been referred to by the minister delivering the address as a man whose best and most enduring monument was the town in which the second severest loss was felt. A quantity of flowers were sent from Boston to beautify the sacred edifice, and, to add to the importance of the occasion, Gov. Talbot, who married one of Mr. Hayden's daughters, and Messrs. Eldridge and Brewster of the Executive Council, were to have been present and had already arrived at Northampton. Two of the administrators of the estate were also on the ground—Messrs. Lincoln and Dalton of Boston. The town presented a pitiable spectacle to-day. Dwelling-houses ground to kindling wood, household goods torn to fragments, huge boulders, machinery, and mud-bedraggled remnants of clothing, met the eye at every turn. From the bend in the river, just below Skinnerville, where the tidal wave partly changed the current of the stream to the fork below the town, the scenes of destruction were truly appalling. A tall brick chimney, and part of the old foundry, were all that remained of the large brass works of Hayden, Gere & Co.; and further down, the drift-wood, the half-destroyed buildings, and the mud-covered streets, attest the damage done.

Haydensville seems to have been unfortunately situated between two river curves, and hence, at one end of the town, is to be seen the effects of the madly rushing torrent, in a sweep of highlands at the other, the effects of the devastating undercurrent of the backwater, as it receded from and finally leaped over the lower bank. It was about eight o'clock when the flood came down, and to use the words of a spectator "a man lived a lifetime before nine o'clock." The brass works were first swept, by a wall of debris from fifteen to twenty feet high, and with the added momentum the flood went over the road-bed, devastating lawns and portions of houses, leaving a boiler 2,000 feet from its original position, and placing it on an elevated spot in front of a house, tearing out the stone sides of the river and placing the boulders in the bed of the channel or on the sidewalk, and sweeping men, women, and children into eternity. Wooden houses were seen to come bounding along like corks, and from the interior of more than one was heard the shrieks of wives and daughters, whom their husbands and fathers had left a few moments before in fancied security. It was a sight which paralyzed every beholder. In less than an hour the waters had subsided, and the search for bodies began.

So far 34 bodies have been recovered in the town, and the majority of those were found to-day in the rear of elevated buildings, far removed from the river brink.

These were removed to the chapel attached to the Congregational Church, where coffins were supplied, and as friends came up they were surrendered to them and the room vacated given to the new arrivals. It was here that bodies were found in the most horrible condition, bruised and cut and generally with every vestige of clothing torn away. Between 20 and 30 dwelling-houses were wrecked more or less, and the gas works are entirely swept away.

The most horrible fate was that of the occupants of two or three dwelling houses in the lower bend of the river, who were cut off from the highland and perished within sight of neighbors, who were powerless to aid. The only man in the employ of the Hayden & Gere Company who lost his life was a Frenchman named Brodier, who had back to the work-room to get his coat from where it was hanging after he was warned to flee for his life.

The damage done to business is greater than in some of the other places. Hayden, Gere & Co., who employ about 300 men, yesterday issued a notice to the effect that a large force of workmen was wanted to clear away the debris of the old factory; that preference would be given those previously in the employ of the firm. Air wages will be paid as soon as the accounts can be made up, and anyone desiring work may have it by applying at the temporary works, to be opened on Monday. The firm estimates its loss at from \$40,000 to \$50,000 on the handsome buildings and their contents, including the elegant offices erected by Joel Hayden. The savings bank, Masonic Lodge, and six tenement houses are also lost, valued at about \$1,500 each.

SKINNERSVILLE.

The most frightful havoc of all, as regards extent of damage to property, took place in Skinnerville. Though fewer lives were lost there than elsewhere. Only three houses are left standing in the village. Of these, two are at the lower end, near Haydensville, and the other is that of Mr. Wm. Skinner, who founded the place. One large house lies on its side, with the roof torn off. Others have drifted against and crushed neighboring houses.

Sometimes the entire side of a house is gone, showing the whole arrangement of the interior, just as it sometimes seen on the stage.

Some are canted upon end, with the front door opening toward the sky. Again, one sees high upon the branches of some tree a huge mass of splinters with perhaps some broken pieces of household furniture and duttering scraps of apparel, showing that there was once a house and a home.

The new house of Mr. Skinner, an elegant and substantial edifice, appears at first sight uninjured, but on going in front, the whole corner of the veranda is seen to be torn away, while water fills the basement and is several feet deep on the first floor.

The water forcing its way up from the basement tried to lift the house from its foundations and broke a great hole like a hopper, in the rear parlor floor, through which the furniture dropped into the cellar. The house was only saved from the fate of its neighbors by the massive chimneys, which securely anchored it to the ground.

Mr. Skinner's silk factory was entirely demolished, and the boiler was carried over 1,000 feet down the river.

Mr. Skinner estimates his total loss at \$140,000. He has lived in the place 30 years, and built it from nothing.

It is doubtful whether he will resume business in the old place, it is so utterly ruined. The whole conformation of the village is changed and no one can tell where his house or land belongs. Only four persons were lost in this place.

FLORENCE.

When compared with the other villages through which the terrible flood surged, Florence may be said to have escaped serious damage.

No person living there lost his life. The waters there had the sweep of 100 acres of fine meadow land, and rushed over its enlarged borders with the speed of lightning, carrying away everything which had been planted and covering the grass land with a foot or two of soft earth on which is piled indiscriminately several thousand cords of timber and building material of every kind.

A number of bodies have been recovered there, however, the majority of them having been identified as belonging in Leeds Haydensville.

NORTHAMPTON.

There was but small damage done. Nine bodies it

is understood have been recovered, and those have been identified.

An inquest has been called for by some of the residents of the immediate district and will be held, probably, beginning to-morrow, the object being to find, if possible, where the blame for the condition of the dam ought to lie.

The Springfield Union is authority for the statement that Gen. Edson of Hadley will introduce a bill in the Legislature to-morrow for the relief of the sufferers of Williamsburg and elsewhere.

The bill will provide for the rebuilding and repairing of roads and bridges destroyed by an appropriation from the State.

THE NUMBER OF LIVES LOST PROBABLY IN EXCESS OF 150—A DETAILED ESTIMATE OF THE LOSSES NOT YET POSSIBLE.

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—The latest figures of the loss of life occasioned by the breaking of the Williamsburg reservoir make the total 144, divided as follows between the three places: Williamsburg 60; Leeds, 49; Haydensville, 35. These figures only represent the persons whose loss is positively known, though the bodies of all have not yet been recovered.

Bodies are constantly being found, and in some cases those of persons not supposed to be lost, so that it seems perfectly safe to say that the total loss of life will exceed 150, if indeed it does not more nearly approach 200.

THE LOSSES.

It is utterly impossible as yet to give a detailed estimate of the losses. Aside from buildings destroyed and damaged, bridges have been carried away, roads ruined, and hundreds of acres of meadow land rendered almost valueless. The total loss must far exceed \$1,000,000, and will probably come nearer \$2,000,000. The following is a general estimate of the losses in the several places:

At Williamsburg—W. H. Avison, flouring mill swept away, \$10,000; H. L. James, mill damaged and left with out-water-power, \$20,000; houses, barns, etc., gone, \$40,000.

At Skinnerville—William Skinner's silk factory and twelve tenement houses destroyed, \$120,000; other houses and barns, \$10,000.

At Haydensville—Hayden, Gere & Co.'s brass works, savings bank buildings, and tenements swept away, \$250,000; Hayden Tobacco Company's mill carried off, \$7,000; Hayden Foundry and Machine Company's works damaged \$5,000; other houses and stores, \$30,000; gas works, \$5,000.

At Leeds—Nonotuck Silk Company, dam broken and several buildings and houses carried away, \$25,000; George P. Warner's button factory destroyed, and three tenements, \$100,000; other houses, barns, &c., \$20,000.

At Northampton—Emery Wheel Co., damage \$2,000. At Florence—The Florence Manufacturing Company's Brush Factory, damage to stock \$4,000; Nonotuck Silk Company's silk Mill partially torn away, and stock damaged \$5,000.

The damage to the town of Williamsburg by the loss of bridges, great destruction of roads, and the complete ruin of the best meadow lands, is at present incalculable, but it is such as to seriously cripple the town. Three bridges were carried away in the village of Williamsburg: one wooden and two iron. In the village of Leeds, one bridge was taken off, and in the village of Florence one iron and two wooden bridges were swept away. Hayden, Gere & Co. of Haydensville, one of the most important firms losing their establishments, will have a card in *The Springfield Republican* to-morrow morning, saying that they intend to rebuild their factory at once, and advertising for workmen for that purpose. Their employees will be paid as soon as the accounts can be made up, and the firm offers aid to those of their workmen in need of it.

CAUSE OF THE CALAMITY.

THE WILLIAMSBURG RESERVOIR NEVER, UNTIL RECENTLY, CONSIDERED SAFE—STATEMENTS BY THE GATEKEEPER AND AN OLD RESIDENT—THE WORK DONE IN A SLOVENLY MANNER—SPECULATIONS AS TO THE DIRECT CAUSE OF THE BREAK.

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—It appears that serious doubts as to the safety of the reservoir have been entertained ever since it was built, nine years ago. The gatekeeper has several times expressed fears to his employers, calling special attention once to the point where the break occurred; but the examiner always reported everything safe. Vastly more important testimony than this of the gatekeeper, however, is that furnished by Mr. Lewis Bodman, a lifelong and well known resident of Williamsburg and for many years connected with its manufacturing interests. Mr. Bodman is thoroughly familiar with the reservoir, which he helped to pay for, being at that time the owner of the James mill, which he sold to Mr. James six years ago. A reporter of *The Springfield Republican* had an interview with Mr. Bodman Saturday evening. He gave his opinions with great frankness. He says that the proprietors were not satisfied with the work done on the reservoir when it was built, and felt that it was not safe. Mr. Bodman accompanied the late Lieut.-Gov. Hayden, when the reservoir was first filled, but was not until the Spring of 1866, and says that they both expected to see a break at that first trial. It manifested no special weakness, however, and at various times subsequently it was strengthened, the most important of such operations and one of the most recent being the "rip-rapping."

Mr. Bodman, however, confesses that he never felt quite satisfied with the reservoir during the three years of its history when he was mill proprietor, and so part owner of it. Since then he has maintained his interest in the manufacturing enterprises so fully as to keep himself well informed of the condition of the reservoir, and he says that he has become better satisfied with it, though if he had been asked the day before the disaster whether he considered it safe, he would have unhesitatingly replied in the affirmative. Indeed, Mr. Bodman did thus assure a townsman, who, only a week ago, as if with some admonition of the fate that overtook him on Saturday, particularly questioned him as to whether there was not danger that the reservoir would give way. This opinion of its safety Mr. Bodman says was coincided with by all the manufacturers, who, he remarked, had the most reason to feel anxiety if there were any grounds for it, as having most at stake in the matter.

Upon being more closely questioned as to his opinion of the contractor of the reservoir, Mr. Bodman gave an opinion which fully confirmed the impression that the reporter had received from a visit to the ruins, namely, that the work, as a whole, was not satisfactory, and that the upper third of the wall was built in a slovenly manner. He says that when the contractor had reached this stage it was getting late in the Fall and cold weather was coming on. The engineer was sick some of the time and did not exercise so constant and close a supervision as his position demanded, and the contractors hurried up their work as rapidly as possible, with too little regard, Mr. Bodman thinks, to the quality of their work. Notwithstanding, however, Mr. Bodman's confession, that both he and the other proprietors of the reservoir were dissatisfied with the style of construction, it was examined and accepted by the Commissioners of Hampshire County, who have also, since then, more than once examined it and advised as to repairs upon it.

The direct cause of the disaster, aside from the general weakness of the dams, must remain a subject of speculation. The gate-keeper detected no sign of danger when he made an examination at early dawn, and what the last straw was that broke the great back of the reservoir can never be definitely known. Perhaps as satisfactory a theory as any is the one advanced by a man familiar with the case that the frosts had started the earth, so that the water had found numerous little courses through it, which finally carried off

the first mass of earth Saturday morning and at once precipitated the catastrophe. The gatekeeper, as already said, has at various times feared a break, from the fact that a stream of water flowed constantly through the bottom of the gateway, while there were also a number of small streams, some of them quite minute, along the bottom on either side of the center.

It is a curious fact that, while the gate-keeper has always felt most anxious of the spot where the break actually came, the proprietors of the reservoir, who had fears as to its safety, felt afraid of the opposite side. As to these little streams of water, a gentleman familiar with the construction of reservoirs says that it is quite impossible to construct such a dam so that there shall be absolutely no show of water on the lower side. This gentleman was fully conversant with the construction and character of the Williamsburg reservoir, and says that he never felt there was ground for alarm in such small streams as trickled through it. The soil, he says, was full of springs, and from these springs, he thinks, came most of the little water-flows.

INCIDENTS OF THE OVERFLOW.

WONDERFUL ESCAPE OF MRS. HARDING AT LEEDS—NARROW ESCAPES FROM DROWNING—RELIEF MEETINGS AND AID FOR THE FLOODED DISTRICT—FUNERAL SERVICES AT WILLIAMSBURG.

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—Of thrilling incidents and interesting details there is absolutely no end. From a large mass collected by the reporters of *The Republican*, in the various villages, the following are selected as the most striking:

A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE FROM DROWNING.

A most wonderful rescue, and probably the only one of an adult person, from the flood used at Leeds, was that of Mrs. Mary C. Harding, a sister of Miss Maria Clark of this city. She was at work on the second floor of the Nonotuck silk factory when the alarm was given, and hardly had she reached the ground when the shout was raised, "Run across the bridge." She started, leading the whole company. But soon the cries were of another sort. "Come back" and "Don't go over" were sounded on every side. It was too late for Mrs. Harding, though. She was on the bridge, and going back was as perilous as going forward. She ran as seldom woman ran before, and, sooner had she, and perhaps half a dozen other women, struck the bridge, which went down with a crash, carrying with it seven girls and women, who were but a little too late. The woman kept on running for Ross's store, making, as she averted, pretty good time, while her companions who had crossed the bridge, entered the fated boarding-house. She passed the little gate near the bridge, and just got through the larger gate below the steps leading to the store, when the water rushed up, carried off the gate and threw her down near the lower stair. Luckily two men were on the bank and she was drawn up, and not a minute too soon, for just then the water went off and the three had to seek safety higher up the street, going with the chance of entering the house as her companions did; and from the water afterwards, makes Mrs. Harding's case a most marvelous one. She, only, of the 13 who started over the bridge, was saved. It so happened that one of her rescuers was Willie Swift, the lover of her room-mate, Mary Woodward, who was swept away in the tide. Mrs. Harding lost everything she had, her property being in the boarding-house. But, thoroughly wet and somewhat bruised as she was, she went pluckily to work, spending most of the afternoon attending to the dead and the bereaved living, starting at night with friends for the city.

OTHER SCENES AT LEEDS.

One of the saddest cases was that of three French children, neither of them over nine years old, who sat among the living and the dead, in Mr. Warner's house at Leeds, and told questioners that they could not find their father and a brother and their mother, but that their father was safe and attending to the dead people. But many well knew that the brother and sisters were among the dead; yet no one had the heart to break the terrible news to the children. Two of the little ones have been adopted by Mr. Millett, one of the overseers of the silk factory.

Mr. H. H. Tilton of Williamsburg was carrying his aged mother, Sarah H. Snow, to a place of safety, when the unrelenting waters seized them. Mrs. Snow was carried away, while he grasped a tree about 15 feet high, growing on a bank, and was saved, though the waters reached and swayed him. Messrs. Harmon and Rhoades, living in the same house, got across the street into another dwelling, the lower story of which was flooded, but some apple trees broke the force of the wave, and the house stood.

Three men, J. M. Stephenson and two new hands whose names are not known, fearing the safety of the boarding-house, in which they were with a number of others, would give way, despite the entreaties of their associates, left it and climbed an apple-tree near by. The latter fell under them and they were drowned, while those at the boarding-house remained unharmed. One man ventured upon the roof of the boarding-house, and though it crumbled under him he clung to it and saved his life. John Atkins, foreman of the weaving-room, died in saving the lives of his wife and two children.

RELIEF FOR THE SUFFERERS.

The citizens of Williamsburg held a meeting on Saturday evening, and appointed a committee to raise subscriptions, to collect the destitute, and organize the search for the missing. Northampton and the adjoining towns have been sending in supplies of food, clothing, and money since the disaster, and contributions were taken up for the sufferers in the churches throughout Western Massachusetts to-day. The collections in the churches of Springfield amounted to about \$2,000, and the subscription papers will swell this amount to about \$5,000. All the larger towns and cities are organizing relief societies.

The funeral of nine victims of the disaster took place in front of the Congregational Church at Williamsburg, about 3 o'clock p. m. Seats were arranged in the pews, and the ministers had chairs on the steps, and the premises about were crowded. Clergymen from the surrounding towns conducted the services.

CONDITION OF THE RUINED RESERVOIR. A SKETCH OF THE APPEARANCE OF THE RUINS—HISTORY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RESERVOIR—ITS DIMENSIONS.

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—A reporter of *The Republican*, who examined the ruins of the reservoir a few hours after the disaster, describes the general aspect as follows: The eastern section of the reservoir, on which the first break occurred, has disappeared from the top to the base, with the exception of a few rocks at the bottom, almost to the eastern bank. Near the center of the stream the stone wall which inclosed the iron tube remains almost intact on the upper side, but on the lower side a considerable number of stones have been carried away by the force of the torrent. The western half of the reservoir has suffered less seriously, though even on that side only the extreme portion, where comparatively little of the pressure came, remains unharmed. Much more of the base of the stone wall, however, remains here than on the other side, so that one can walk upon the remains of it to the very center of the stream.

Of the whole extent of the reservoir, as it stood on Saturday morning, it is safe to say that not one-sixth remains. The feature that most impresses one about the ruins is the smallness of the stone wall when compared with the immense extent of water which the reservoir held. This wall was understood to be eight feet thick at the base. Upon measuring a section of it, however, as it stood intact, some ten feet above the bed of the stream, the reporter found it lacked about three inches of being six feet across. The upper third of the wall as one looks across the chasm at what remained on the eastern side, cannot fail to strike the average observer, possessing only the information and judgment of common sense, as seriously lacking in strength and stability. Without applying the tests which experts in such matters will doubtless soon put to it, a spectator from the opposite bank can hardly restrain the judgment of "dumsey," as he views the upper portion of the wall; and the general impression from an inspection of the wall, as a whole, is that it lacked the strength which so great a strain demanded.

HISTORY OF THE RESERVOIR.

The reservoir was one of a system of dams and reservoirs owned by a corporation called the Mill River and

Williamsburg Reservoir Company, which included all the manufacturing establishments on the line of Mill River from Williamsburg to Northampton. It was situated on the east branch of Mill River, about three miles from the village of Williamsburg, in the northern corner of Northampton. The stream which supplies it has its rise only about three miles above the reservoir, after joining the west branch at the village of Williamsburg forms Mill River proper, which flows through Haydensville and Florence and empties into the Connecticut River at Northampton. The reservoir was constructed in the Summer and Fall of 1865, though it was not filled and used until the following Spring. Emery B. Wells of Northampton and Joel Bassett of East Hampton were the contractors, and the cost was \$35,000.

A stone wall was first built, which was stipulated to rise from a width of eight feet at the base pan to two feet at the top, which latter was 42 feet above the bed of the stream. This wall was constructed to be laid in the best known cement, and the projectors claimed it would be as strong as a single shaft of granite. Enveloping this wall on either side was a mass of earth, which sloped down on the water side at an angle of 20 degrees, and on the lower side at an angle of 45 degrees; a lateral section of this earthen support measured about 120 feet at the base, the greater mass of which was on the water side. At the center of the stream, enclosed in a stone wall, running at right angles to the main wall of the reservoir, ran a iron tube of two feet diameter, for controlling the flow of water, extending, of course, a few feet beyond this eastern wall, at both extremities of its base. This wall of earth, 120 feet wide at bottom, was 16 feet across at the top, covering the crest of the stone wall, two feet in depth, in order to prevent danger from frost; and along its top furnished a good driveway. The water never rose to the crest of the dam, being kept about two feet below that line by means of a waste-way at the western side. The reservoir covered an area of one hundred and eleven acres, and its average depth was twenty-four feet.

THE RESERVOIR AFTER THE BREAK—THE MASONRY WORK ALMOST TOTALLY DESTROYED—THE BED OF THE STREAM TORN UP AND THE LAND DOTTED WITH STONES.

SPRINGFIELD, May 17.—The scene at the ruins of the reservoir is thus described by a reporter of *The Republican*: